

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK



Sair-e-Nizamuddin Basti

Self Help Group from Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti,
New Delhi Developed as a part of
NIZAMUDDIN URBAN RENEWAL INITIATIVE

THE CONTEXT

The Cultural revival component of the Nizamuddin Urban Renewal Initiative adopt an integrated approach with an underlying principle of preserving the living culture of the area while supporting socio economic development of the community. The emphasis was on to demonstrate how culture can become a catalyst for development.

The revival and revitalization of the Nizamuddin area needed to be spearheaded with the communities living in the basti who are the traditional custodians of their heritage. It was also realized that for long term sustainability of the programme the involvement and leadership of the community is critical. The programme started with identifying a youth group from the basti who could be oriented towards creating heritage awareness amongst the larger residents of the basti as well as the visitors coming to the basti.

FORMING THE GROUP

After 18 months (June 2008-december 2009) of continuous discussions, trainings and working together with around 15 members from the youth group the formation of Self Help Group, Sair E Nizamuddin was facilitated in January 2009 with 8 members with an objective to train the youth group and empower them as heritage volunteer/tourist guides which could serve as a means to improve the quality of life.

Self-Help group is a voluntary association of people, which functions democratically and accountably, to achieve the collective goals of the group. It is a noble way in organising particular section of the community into a group with a specific purpose and makes them visible in the larger community.

While initiating the process of forming SHG, the needs, issues and concerns of the youth were addressed. They were made aware about the concept of SHG and its key features as below:

- Determine the goals and objectives of the SHG and to constitute rules and regulations for better functioning
- Active participation and distribution of leadership.
- Equality of power and influence.
- Cohesiveness.
- Diagnose the problem areas and involve all the members to deal with the same
- Support and appreciate each other's work
- Address disagreements in a constructive manner
- Elect leader and other functionaries of the group
- Regular attendance
- Savings on monthly basis
- Sanctioning of loans and loan repayments
- Book keeping and documentation
- Audited statements

TRAINING AND ORIENTATION:

The tourist guide training programme was developed as an income generation programme for the youth from the basti to enable economic benefits from increased number of tourists. Emphasis was given to language development both in English and Urdu. While the English language training was organised through the British Council for 6 months in 2009-10, the Urdu classes were given by linguists from Jamia Millia Islamia University.

The first exercise that was done with the heritage volunteers was the cultural mapping of tangible and intangible heritage of basti. An inventory of around 67 buildings was made. Photo documentation of major festivals observed in basti e.g, Urs, Eid, Shab e raat, gusl, basant were done. It also included creation of festival routes in the basti by the heritage volunteers.

Major training programme included Workshop on Tourism, Heritage and Hospitality in collaboration with Department of Tourism, Hotel, Hospitality and Heritage Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia in July 2010. The three day training workshop had 12 lectures covering subjects like history, architecture, aspects of travel and tourism industry and personality development.

At the end of the workshop a written test was conducted with questions based on the lecture series and participants were given grades as per their performance along with certificate of appreciation.

Two exposure visits to Agra was organised (one in 2011 and the other in 2015) for the community volunteers where they participated in the Tajganj Heritage walk organized by the Centre for Urban and Regional. This trip helped address several fragments of development of the group's heritage walks that they conduct in Nizamuddin area. The visit helped the members in manifold.

The Tajganj walk covered a mix of built monuments, living traditions such as stone inlay work, carpet weaving and Zardozi embroidery, and finally the life and culture of the village. The group members of Sair-e-Nizamuddin gained great insights from the walk and have implemented some of the ideas they learnt during their visits to enhance the viewer experience.

Two (one in 2010 and the other in 2015) life skill training workshops were organised. The week long schedule made them aware of the dynamics of team spirit and also to interpret the role and responsibilities of each member of the group ensuring productivity at individual level which ultimately contributes to the growth of the group as a whole. A series of activities encompassed different sessions that focused on teambuilding topics such as trust, listening skills, creative thinking, delegation vs. authority and finally leadership.

These workshops helped the volunteers to come up with their own logo and newsletter and set goals for Sair-e-Nizamuddin group.

It also included media workshop, theatre and storytelling workshops.

The list of heritage volunteers associated with the group over the period 2010-2015 is mentioned below. The strength over the years has varied as old members have moved on giving space for the new ones. Mostly members have moved on in search of better career option as it still is feasible only as seasonal (October to March) and part time career. But no extensive training for the subsequent volunteers was organized as in case of the first set of volunteers. The trained members from the first group carried the training sessions for subsequent new members. The new members who are joining are mostly students who are keen to learn, practice and conduct the walk to support their college education.

Sl. No	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1	Aamir Abbas	Aamir Abbas	Amir Abbas	Aamir Abbas	Amir Abbas	Amir Abbas
2	Mohd Umair	Mohd Umair	Mohd Umair	Mohd Umair	Faizaan	Faizaan
3	Mohd Asad	Kamal Hasan			Mohd Zaeem	Mohd Zaeem
4	Mohd Danish	Mohd Danish			Shams Ur Rahman	Shams Ur Rahman
5	Ikramuddin	Ikramuddin			Md.Soen	Md.Soen
6	Nabeel Khan	Nabeel Khan			Sameer Siddiqui	Dilshad Ahmad
7	Suhaibuddin	Suhaibuddin			Dilshad Ahmad	
8	Almas Siddiqui	Almas Siddiqui			Bilal Hussain	
9	Kamaal Hassan	Musheer Ahmed				
10	Moinuddin	Farhan Nabi				
11	Musheer Ahmad	Moinuddin				
	2,31, 500	2,10, 000	The group was managed by the Coordinator, supported by the project office		1,09,000	61,800
					Payment to coordinator not included	

The monthly collection of Rs.100 from individual members was operational till December 2011. After April 2012 that most of the volunteer group dispersed and joined full time job. However the members continued to donate 10% of the money collected from the walk to the bank account.

While some of the volunteers get paid directly by the visitors or groups, the walks conducted by the volunteers for the school children groups are compensated through the project office. The charges given to the volunteers are Rs.300 per walk irrespective of the number of visitors in the group. The volunteers were paid a stipend of Rs.2000 per month from 2010-2012. From 2013 onwards the volunteers are paid on account of the walks they conduct as a part of the outreach programme for school children. Hence the school programmer runs through the heritage volunteers paid against walks they manage to conduct per school group basis.

Over the years many organization/institutions and schools have experienced the heritage walk in the project area. The ones who have made several visits are listed below:

Sl no	Travel houses	Universities / Institutions	Schools
1	Sita travels	CCRT (Center for Culture Resources & Training)	Quest Initiative of Indian Express group
2	Kolam Travels	IIPA (Indian Institute of Public administration)	NIE, Newspaper in Education, Tol
3	Tushita Travels	ORF (Observer Research Foundation)	Sardar patel, Lodi Road
4	Discover India Tours	DIHRM (Delhi Institute of Heritage Research and Management)	Somerville Public School
5	India Explore Journey	SPA (School of Planning and Architecture)	Navyug Mandir Marg
6	Cox and Kings	Havard Business school	Shikshantar Gurgaon
7		Chou University, Japan	Ardee Public School
8		HUDCO (Housing and Urban Development Corporation)	Indirapuram Public School
9		Rotary Club	Maxfort, Rohini
10		Global Encounters Camp	Sanskriti
11		Ashoka University	Ramjas School
12		Jamia Milia Islamia	Shri Ram School
13		Sushant School of architecture	Bloom Public School
14		Indraprasth University	Nirmal Bhartiya School
15		Gargi College	Salwan Public School
16		IGNOU	N.K.Bagdoria School
17			K.V.sainik School
18			Banyan Tree
19			St Mary's School
20			Ryan International
21			St Paul's School
22			Cambridge School
23			Dr. Radhakrishnan, Def Col
24			Blue Bells
25			KV, Rohini – 8
26			Bhatnagar int,

The members of Sair e Nizamuddin group are dedicated to appreciate and promote more than 700 years of cultural heritage. Since its formation in 2010, the members have carried out a wide range of activities and successfully created greater appreciation for our rich historical legacy. The members initially started the walk at Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti but at present there are three different walks being conducted as mentioned below:

Walk at Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti:

With specially created route which starts from a temple and ends at a dargah is the first walk to be launched in March 2010. The walk includes monuments, oral histories, living culture and community landmarks which contribute to the character of the historic neighborhood. Through the archway to phoolwali gali, Khwaja Hall, Imambargah, Kalan Masjid, Ittar wali gali, Chasath Khamba, Ghalib Mazar, the walk ends at the Dargah complex. The walk includes 8 heritage buildings spread over a period from 13th to 16th century. This is the most popular walk amongst the visitors.

In 2010 the walk started with Rs.50 and currently the charges per Indian and foreigners are Rs.500. For large group of around 30 people, a lumpsum amount is charged from Rs.5, 000-10,000.

Walk through the Sufi Shrines around Nizamuddin:

With the establishment of Khanqah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, the historical area in and around hazrat Nizamuddin Basti became blessed with the barkat of the saint. Not only did this make the place a nerve-centre for the chisti silsila, it also became the resting place for a lot of lesser known and hitherto unexplored pirs. The walk, conducted in rickshaw, takes around 2 hours and covers 4 sufi shrines around Nizamuddin before concluding at Dargah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya.

Walk at through the Humayun's Tomb:

Built in 1560 under the supervision of Humayun's wife Haji Begum, and with patronage of his son, the great Emperor Akbar, the Tomb of Humayun, exemplifies the formative stage of the Mughal structural style. The walk at Humayun's Tomb complex takes about more than an hour and includes Isa Khan Complex, Arab ki Serai besides Humayun's Tomb.

Walk at Abdur Rahim Khan I Khanan:

From 2015, the walk at the tomb of Abdur Rahim Khan i Khanan, popularly known as Rahim, has been added. The walk deals on the life and works of Rahim including his military campaigns, poetry and also highlights the important elements of architecture of the tomb.

Besides these walks there are specialized walks conducted as and when they are appropriate like the Iftaar walk. In the holy month of Ramzaan, Iftaar Walk is conducted and is followed by breaking the fast. Visitors join to share the food that is traditionally and ceremoniously used to break 'Roza' at time of 'Iftaar' and enjoy the festivities associated with Ramzaan in this historic neighborhood. Food walks are also conducted. Food is an integral part of Nizamuddin's culture and identity. Several lesser known food joints but serving traditional cuisines are covered in this walk which includes kebab, Biryani, Nahari, roti, sweets and paan.

Data of Visitor's and Students at different sites in the project area (2010 – 2015)

Since 2010 Sair e Nizamuddin has conducted walks for over 13,000 students and 2500 visitors at Nizamuddin Basti and Humayun's Tomb.

Date	H T		H N B		Rahim	
	Students	Visitors	Students	Visitors	Students	Visitors
2010	68	45	176	297		
2011	272	44	135	110		
2012	2818	485	158	220		
2013	4100	279	112	174		
2014	3424	279	20	107		
2015	1175	195	163	307	859	51
Total	11857	1327	764	1215	859	51
Students		Visitors				
11857 (HT)		1327	HT			
764 (HNB)		1215	HNB			
859 (Rahim)		51	Rahim			
13480		2593				
Grand Total			13480			
			2593			
			16073			

Operation:

The walk query lands up or is forwarded to the group coordinator, who then distributes the walks equally amongst the group members, depending on their availability. The walks are customized as per the preference of the visitor which includes, date, time, interest and duration.

Finances:

The heritage volunteers have been successfully managing the functioning of the group including finances. The bank account has been opened since May 2010. The closing balance as of December 2015 is Rs. 29,981/-. The group members sustain themselves by charging fees from the visitors for conducting the guided walk and 10% of the fee goes to the group which adds up to build a corpus. The coordinator of the group has been supported by the project office since 2009.

Publicity:

The group has a flier which details out the walk and a facebook account. The face book account is directing the queries to the group and linking them directly with the clients while minimizing the dependence on the project office for e-correspondence. There is a contact number in the flier as well as in the FB account through which people can directly reach the group.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES:

Quarterly Newsletter

The media workshop conducted for the heritage volunteers taught them the skill to write features, reports, columns and letters. Soon after this training the volunteers initiated a quarterly newsletter "Anmol Basti" highlighting the issues, personalities, festivals and features. The printing of the newsletter was facilitated by the project office. For 2010-2011, around 1000 prints were done and distributed. In 2014-2015, the prints were increased to 1500 to cover all the households in the basti and it became a bi-lingual issue with hindi and urdu.

Theatre and story telling

Over 2010-2015, a total 5 month long theatre workshops were organised in consecutive years in association with Urdu Academy for volunteers as well as for other interested children in the basti in the art form. The theatre productions included Munshi Prem Chand's Mantar, Panchayat, Gadbad Jhala and the other stories included stories based on the life of Hazrat Amir Khusrau. A series of 15 storytelling sessions culminated into a narrative on "Mirza Ghalib", which the volunteers have performed at India International Centre in 2011, Ghalib Academy in 2012 and World Book Fair of National Book Trust in 2012 and Sardar Patel school in 2013. Some of the members are trained in dastangoi, the traditional form of Urdu storytelling and performing since 2013 famous dastan of Amir Hamza and Amar Ayyar at various platforms. So far the volunteers have performed at 15 events which includes at Humayun's Tomb in 2014, Chausath Khamba, 2014, World Book Fair of NBT 2014-15, Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies and Jamia Milia Islamia in 2015.

Coordinating Basti resources for Apni Basti Mela :

The volunteer groups are mainly responsible for all coordination with the Basti resource persons to put together the Apni Basti Mela including the heritage walks. The group has been managing the mela for last four consecutive years.

Collaborations:

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed in between India City walk (ICW) and Sair-e Nizamuddin. India City walk have been promoting and marketing the Nizamuddin heritage walk conducted by the community volunteers. ICW has been conducting heritage walks in different parts of Delhi and other parts across India. For Nizamuddin area they have collaborated with Sair e Nizamuddin group.

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Objectives December 2017:

- Manage the group's activities with 4-5 regular members and work on capacity building of the group.
- Establish tie ups with at least 4 new tour operators and 10 schools .
- Increase the corpus by including sale of Activity book, children's book and Jashn book.
- License to the regular volunteers to conduct the walk in the project area.
- Establish the school programme and aim at getting 10,000 students to the project area.
- Start working on Nature Walks.

Observations:

- Volunteers to be given a batch with their name and group's name.
- New walk flier and added attractions to the walk like calligraphy, attar, kite flying, pigeon flying.
- Signage/panels at specific points could be helpful.

